

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

EUR-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCCT-01 SAM-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1005

INFO SITREP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 0006

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION JULY 8: CHRISTIANS ADVANCE IN NORTH;

DIPLOMATIC INDICATIONS INAUSPICIOUS

REF: BEIRUT 5953

1. SUMMARY: CHRISTIAN COUNTEROFFENSIVE IN NORTH GAINS GROUND
IN VERY INTENSIVE FIGHTING. BEIRUT CONFRONTATION LINE AND TELL
ZAAATAR AREA REMAIN NORMALLY HOT. SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN MEXICAN
STANDOFFS CONTINUE IN SIDON AREA AND AROUND BEKAA CITIES.
SEVERAL TRADITIONAL FRONTS ELSEWHERE ACTIVE. ARAB LEAGUE
MEDIATION EFFORT STUMBLIES, BUT LIBYAN PRIME MINISTER JALLOUD
STILL ATTEMPTING AT LEAST ARRANGE SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN UNDERSTANDINGS.
BOTH KFOUR FRONT AND PLO CONCERNED ABOUT SOVIET AND SYRIAN
POSITIONS IN AFTERMATH OF KHADDAM VISIT TO MOSCOW. JUNBLATT
INCREASINGLY OBSTREPEROUS, NOW SEEEMS UNWILLING EVEN TO TALK TO
ADVERSARIES. RAYMOND EDDE "NATIONAL FRONT" PLANNING TO SEEK
INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. WEST BEIRUT LIVING CONDITIONS AT
DANGEROUS LOWLEVEL AS PRESS SPEAKS OF "INSECURITY PSYCHOSIS."
END SUMMARY

2. FOCUS REMAINS ON NORTH LEBANON WHERE KEYNOTE IS

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INCREASINGLY OBVIOUS SYRIAN/CHRISTIAN COLLABORATION. OPPOSING

RADIO STATIONS BROADCAST CONTRADICTORY REPORTS, BUT SYRIAN AND
RIGHTIST FORCES APPEAR TO HAVE DEFINITELY CONSOLIDATED THEIR
COUNTERATTACK NORTH OF CHEKKA/KFAR HAZIR/AMIOUN, ALL OF WHICH
ARE IN CHRISTIAN HANDS, THUS SECURING PRINCIPAL ACCESS
ROUTE FROM CHRISTIAN HEARTLAND TO EMBATTLED CITY OF ZGHORTA.
CHRISTIAN SOURCE HOWEVER ADMITS THAT PALESTINIANS TOOK SEVERAL
HUNDRED MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PRISONERS IN CHEKKA. PRESS
REPORTS VIOLENT FIGHTING AND ESTIMATES OVER 500 KILLED IN KOURA
AREA DURING JULY 7, ESPECIALLY AROUND CHEKKA, AND LARGE
SCALE TANK ASSAULTS SUPPORTED BY ARTILLERY IN OTHER AREAS OF
NORTH. TRIPOLI/ZGHORTA ARE VERY ACTIVE. FIRES DUE TO
SHELLING ALSO A MAJOR PROBLEM. PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST SIDE
CLAIMS 15 SYRIANS HAVE DEFECTED WITH 15 ARMORED VEHICLES AND
10 RECOILLESS RIFLES. IF THERE IS ANY TRUTH TO THIS AND SIMILAR
EARLIER REPORTS, ONE CAUSE MAY BE THAT MOST SYRIAN TROOPS
ARE SUNNI MUSLIM, AS ARE PALESTINIANS, WHEREAS SYRIAN LEADERSHIP
AND MANY ARMY OFFICERS ARE ALAWITE.

3. IN BEIRUT GIANT PORT FIRE CONTINUES. IN CENTRAL CITY,
FIGHTING AND ARTILLERY EXCHANGES SOMEWHAT DECREASED JULY 7.
IN SUBURBS, "SUICIDE RAIDS" CONTINUE BETWEEN CHIAH AND AIN
EL-RUMMANEH, AND COMBAT LEVEL REMAINS HIGH AT HADETH/
LAYLAKE. ENTIRE AREA FROM NABA TO DEKOUANE REMAINS ACTIVE
WITH ARTILLERY FIRE CONTINUING IN TELL ZAATAR VICINITY, WHICH NOW
SAID FOULED BY SCORES OF DECOMPOSING CADAVERS. SHORT TRUCE
WAS CALLED JULY 7 TO PERMIT BULLDOZER TO CLOSE TRENCH NEAR
TELL ZAATAR INTO WHICH SEVERAL DOZEN BODIES HAD BEEN THROWN.
TELL ZAATAR SITUATION STAGNANT, ALTHOUGH PALESTINIANS CLAIM TO
HAVE RETAKEN SHEPHERD MONASTERY NEAR CAMP. ONE
CHRISTIAN OFFICIAL IN NORTH ADMITS THAT PALESTINIAN EFFORT THERE
HAS FORCED REDEPLOYMENT OF CHRISTIAN FORCES NORTHWARD, DELAYING
FALL OF TELL ZAATAR.

4. IN THE BEKAA, SYRIAN BLOCKADE OF BAALBEK AND HERMEL
CONTINUES WITH SPORADIC ARTILLERY EXCHANGES AND FEARS
EXPRESSED FOR SAFETY OF WORLD FAMOUS ROMAN TEMPLE COMPLEX.
IN SOUTH, ARTILLERY EXCHANGES CONTINUE BETWEEN SIDON AND SYRIAN
FORCES AT HILALIYYA. ZAHRANI REFINERY STILL NOT OPERATING, BUT
EARLIER REPORTED DAMAGE NOW SAID TO BE MINIMAL AND COULD BE
EASILY REPAIRED IF SYRIANS PERMIT. BOMBARDMENTS AND GROUND
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ACTION CONTINUE IN ALEY/KAHALE MOUNTAIN AREA.

5. NEGOTIATIONS UNDER ARAB LEAGUE SPONSORSHIP
SCHEDULED AT SOFAR JULY 7 CANCELLED FOR SECOND TIME IN 48 HOURS
AND AL SECGEN MAHMOUD RIAD CONVENES JULY 12 AL FOREIGN
MINSTERS' CONFERENCE, IN WHAT LOCAL PRESS DESCRIBES AS TACIT
ADMISSION OF FAILURE. L'ORIENT LE JOUR ATTRIBUTES COLLAPSE
TO PERSISTENCE OF COMBAT, CONTINUED SYRIAN PRESENCE IN

LEBANON, AND GROWING DISCONTENT OF KAMAL JUNBLATT. AL TEAM
MEMBERS TUNISIAN FONMIN HABIB CHATTI AND BHARAINI FONMIN
MOHAMMED BEN MOBARAK HAVE RETURNED HOME.

6. LIBYAN PREMIER JALLOUD PERSISTS IN OPTIMISM, MEETING JULY 7
IN BEIRUT WITH BOTH KAMAL JUNBLATT AND YASIR ARAFAT.
JALLOUD HOPES AT LEAST THAT SYRIANS WILL WITHDRAW FROM SIDON
AREA IN RETURN FOR REOPENING OF TWO SAIQA OFFICES IN BEIRUT.
HE MAY RETURN TO DAMASCUS TODAY.

7. FOLLOWING MEETING WITH JALLOUD, JUNBLATT TOLD JOURNALISTS,
"IF THE ISOLATIONISTS WISH TOTAL WAR, WE WILL SERVE IT TO THEM,"
AND AFTER MEETING PALESTINIAN LEADERS HE SAID, "SPEAK TO ME NO
MORE OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION." ONE REPORT SAYS JUNBLATT IS NOW
REFUSING EVEN TO CONFER WITH SYRIANS UNTIL LATTER HAVE COMPLETELY
WITHDRAWN FORCES FROM LEBANON. HE ALSO SAID TO BE PLANNING TO
APPOINT A "GOVERNOR" OF WEST BEIRUT AND TO RECONSTITUTE LEFTIST
MILITIAS AS "ARMY" OF THE "NATIONAL MOVEMENT."

8. SOVIET AND SYRIAN POLITICAL POSITIONS CONCERN WARRING
FACTIONS. KFOUR FRONT SUPPOSED TO MEET JULY 8 AT 1100 TO
DISCUSS MESSAGE RECEIVED TWO DAYS AGO FROM PRESIDENT ASSAD.
FRONT PLANS SEND DELEGATION TO DAMASCUS TO DISCUSS RESULTS OF
MOSCOW VISIT OF FONMIN KHADDAM. FRONT MAY ALSO CONSIDER
EFFORTS TO SEEK "INTERNATIONALIZATION" OF LEBANESE PROBLEM.
SOVIET POSITION ALSO OF INTEREST TO ARAFAT, WHO REPORTEDLY WILL
DEPART JULY 8 (IN BOAT FROM TYRE) FOR MOSCOW.

9. RAYMOND EDDE'S NEW "NATIONAL FRONT" REPORTED PLANNING
ISSUE STATEMENT ANNOUNCING SUPPORT OF THREE PRINCIPLES AS
BASIS OF PEACE SETTLEMENT: 1) COMPLETE SYRIAN MILITARY
WITHDRAWAL; 2) NO PARTITION OR EVEN LESSER FORMS OF
"REGIONALIZATION" OR "CONTONIZATION"; AND 3) RETURN TO CAIRO
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ACCORDS ON PALESTINIAN STATUS. "FRONT" REPORTED ALSO
PLANNING ESTABLISH CONTACTS WITH ARAB AMBASSADORS, MESSAGES
TO FOREIGN CHIEFS-OF-STATE, AND TO SEND DELEGATION(S) TO
PRINCIPAL FOREIGN CAPITALS.

10. PRESS OF JULY 8 DESCRIBES LEBANON AS "EMBRACED BY
FLAMES" EXCEPT IN AREAS "PACIFIED" BY SYRIA AND AREAS
INACCESSIBLE TO ONE OR OTHER OPPOSING CAMPS. INCREASING
VIOLENCE WHICH GRIPS COUNTRY CAUSING "INSECURITY PSYCHOSIS."
INCREASING NUMBERS OF LEBANESE REPORTED TAKING THEIR FAMILIES
OUT OF COUNTRY BY WHATEVER MEANS AVAILABLE AND AT ANY COST AS
LIVING CONDITIONS IN BEIRUT DETERIORATE. TOTAL ABSENCE OF FUEL
AND EXTREME SCARCITY OF DRINKING WATER IN WEST BEIRUT NOW
DISTINCT POSSIBILITIES. YASIR ARAFAT REPORTEDLY HAS ORDERED
SEIZURE OF UNRWA FLOUR STOCKS. WEST BEIRUT BANKS DENY THEY

ARE BEING CALLED UPON BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO REVEAL ACCOUNT
DATA.
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